

Reference Numerals

- 1, 31 substrate
- 2 outer periphery
- 3 end surface
- 4, 32 conductive layer
- 5, 33 conductor
- 6, 34 groove
- 7, 35 coil portion
- 8, 39 outer coating
- 9, 36 electrode
- 10 cutting dust
- 11 resin bath
- 12, 21 power supply
- 13, 38 insulating resin
- 14 holder
- 15 electrode plate
- 16 conductive resin
- 17 plate
- 19 electrolytic solution
- 20 electrode plate
- 21 vessel
- 23 oxide layer
- 37 laser

200E10 05/6000F

DESCRIPTION

METHOD OF MANUFACTURING A CHIP INDUCTOR

5 FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a method of manufacturing a chip inductor for use in a variety of consumer electronic equipment and the like.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 With reference to the accompanying drawings, a conventional method of manufacturing a chip inductor will be described hereinafter.

Fig. 18 illustrates a conventional manufacturing process of a chip inductor, Fig. 19 is a cross sectional view of the chip inductor, and Fig. 20 is a perspective view of the chip inductor.

15 In Fig. 18 through Fig. 20, the conventional method of manufacturing the chip inductor comprises a first step of forming conductive layer 32 on rectangular prism substrate 31 made of insulating material of approximately 0.5 mm square by 1 mm in length, a second step of forming coil portion 35 having spiral conductor 33 and groove 34 by slitting the conductive layer 32 spirally with laser 37, a third step
20 of forming electrodes 36 at both ends of the coil portion 35, and a fourth step of forming outer coating 39 by coating the coil portion 35 with insulation resin 38, followed by heating.

In the fourth step, the coil portion 35 is coated on its entire periphery with the insulation resin 38 by rolling the substrate 31 in a direction of (A) on a tape
25 coated with the insulation resin 38.

Thereafter, the insulation resin 38 is heated to form the outer coating 39.

In the above-described method of the prior art, since the insulation resin 38 is coated while rolling the substrate 31 on the tape coated with the insulation resin 38, an external shape of the insulation resin 38 enclosing the prism substrate 31
30 becomes cylindrical, as shown in the cross sectional view of Fig. 19, due to its surface tension.

The chip inductor is especially susceptible to an influence of surface tension of the insulation resin 38, because of very small external dimensions of its main body, which is approximately 0.5 mm square by 1 mm in length.

35 This causes a surface of the outer coating 39 to become round, thereby giving rise to a problem that it can not be mounted properly to a circuit board or the like as it rotates when it is mounted.

The present invention addresses the above-described problem, and is intended to provide a method of manufacturing a chip inductor that makes a
40 mounting surface of the outer coating flat, so as to assure reliable mounting.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In a manufacturing process of a chip inductor, the present invention comprises an electrodeposition coating process, in which an element main body
45 having a coil portion formed thereon is dipped into a bath for electrodepositing a

insulation resin, and an electric field is applied between a conductor of the coil and the resin bath, to cover the coil with the resin by depositing the electrodeposition insulation resin at least on a surface of the conductor of the coil.

The above-described method covers the coil with the electrodeposition insulation resin, instead of coating it with an insulation resin, thereby avoiding an external shape of the outer coating from becoming round due to surface tension of the insulation resin, even if external dimensions of the chip inductor are considerably small. Therefore, this produces an external shape that generally resembles an external shape of a conductive layer, so as to make the outer coating flat, and to improve easiness of mounting of the chip inductor to a circuit board or the like.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figs. 1(a) to 1(f) illustrate a manufacturing process of a chip inductor according to a first exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 2(a) to 2(c) illustrate an electrodeposition coating process of the chip inductor;

Figs. 3(a) to 3(c) illustrate a heating process of the chip inductor;

Fig. 4 is a sectional view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the chip inductor;

Figs. 6(a) to 6(d) illustrate an electrode forming process of a chip inductor according to a second exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 7 is a sectional view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 8 is a perspective view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 9 is a sectional view of another chip inductor according to the second exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 10a and 10b are sectional views of a chip inductor according to a third exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 11 is a sectional view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 12 is a perspective view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 13 is a sectional view of another chip inductor according to the third exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 14(a) to 14(c) illustrate an etching process of a chip inductor according to a fourth exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 15(a) and 15(b) illustrate a process of forming an oxide film of the chip inductor;

Fig. 16 is a sectional view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 17 is a perspective view of the chip inductor;

Figs. 18(a) to 18(d) illustrate a manufacturing process of a chip inductor of the prior art;

Fig. 19 is a sectional view of the prior art chip inductor; and

Fig. 20 is a perspective view of the prior art chip inductor.

THE BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

First Exemplary Embodiment

Referring to Fig. 1 through Fig. 5, a method of manufacturing a chip inductor according to this exemplary embodiment of the invention comprises:

a conductive layer forming process for forming conductive layer 4 on outer periphery 2 and end surfaces 3 of substrate 1 made of insulating material having a prism shape of approximately 0.5 mm square by 1 mm in length;

a coil portion forming process for forming coil portion 7 having conductor 5 and groove 6 by cutting spirally the conductive layer 4 formed on the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 while removing cutting dust 10 of the conductive layer 4;

an etching process for etching the chip inductor element having the coil portion 7 formed thereon;

an insulation resin coating process for forming outer coating 8 by coating the outer periphery 2 and the conductive layer 4 of the etched element with insulation resin 13;

and an electrode forming process for forming electrodes 9 at both ends of the coil portion 7, and for making electrical contacts between the electrodes 9 and the conductive layer 4.

Furthermore, in the insulation resin coating process, the substrate 1 having the coil portion 7 formed thereon is dipped into epoxy-based insulation resin bath 11 for electrodeposition while being held by holder 14, and an electric field is applied between the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7 and the resin bath 11, as shown in Fig. 2. The electric field is applied by power supply 12 connected between electrode plate 15 and the holder 14. Application of the electric field causes the electrodeposition insulation resin to deposit on at least a surface of the conductor 5, to cover the coil portion 7 as insulation resin 13. As described, the insulation resin coating process includes an electrodeposition process. Electrophoretic resin generally available on the market can be used as the electrodeposition resin.

In the electrodeposition process, surfaces of the conductive layer 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 are not exposed to the electrodeposition insulation resin in the resin bath 11, as shown in Fig. 2(b), so as not to be coated with the insulation resin 13. In addition, there is provided an electric-field controlling process to cease application of the electric field before thickness (W1) of the insulation resin 13 covering the coil portion 7 becomes greater than thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4, as shown in Fig. 2 (c).

Furthermore, there is a cleaning process for washing the insulation resin 13, after the electrodeposition process, as well as a heating process, thereafter, for heating the insulation resin 13 to cure.

In the heating process, the insulation resin 13 is heated at a temperature lower than its curing temperature, and then at another temperature higher than the curing temperature of the resin to cure the insulation resin 13.

More specifically, in the heating process, the insulation resin 13 is heated at

200E40-03260007
a temperature (130°C) that is lower than the curing temperature to allow the insulation resin 13 to flow and to fill grooves 6 in the coil portion 7, as shown in Fig. 3(b). The insulation resin 13 is then heated at a temperature (230°C) higher than the curing temperature to form a continuous layer of the insulation resin, as shown in Fig. 3(c).

According to the foregoing method, the insulation resin 13 is not formed by a coating method, but the electrodeposition insulation resin is deposited only on the conductor 5, and cover the entire coil portion 7. Thus, an amount of the coated insulation resin 13 can be controlled accurately as described above, so as to avoid an external shape of the outer coating 8 from becoming round due to surface tension of the insulation resin 13, even if external dimensions of the substrate 1 are substantially small. In other words, an external shape of the chip inductor becomes what is generally the same to an external shape of the conductive layer 4, thereby making the outer coating 8 flat, and improving easiness of mounting it to a circuit board or the like.

In particular, since there is the electric-field controlling process provided in the electrodeposition process to cease application of the electric field before the thickness of the insulation resin 13 becomes greater than thickness of the conductive layer 4, the chip inductor can be miniaturized by reducing the thickness of the insulation resin 13. This makes the external shape of the insulation resin 13 to be the same more accurately to the external shape of the conductive layer 4, so as to further improve flatness of the mounting surface.

In the electrodeposition process, surfaces of the conductive layer 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 are not deposited with the insulation resin 13. This allows electrical contacts between electrodes 9 and the conductive layers 4 when the electrodes 9 are formed at both ends of the coil portion 7. In addition, it also improves reliability of contacts, since surface area of the contacts between the electrodes 9 and the conductive layers 4 can be very large, as shown in Fig. 4.

Furthermore, because there is also the heating process for heating and curing the insulation resin 13 after the electrodeposition process, the outer coating can be formed adequately by curing the insulation resin 13 after the coil portion 7 is covered with the insulation resin 13.

In the heating process, the insulation resin 13 is heated at the temperature lower than the curing temperature, and thereafter, at another temperature higher than the curing temperature of the insulation resin 13. Therefore, the insulation resin 13 deposited to the conductors 5 fills the grooves 6 between adjoining conductors 5 due to its flow property when it is heated at the lower temperature than the curing temperature of the insulation resin 13. Thus, flat surface of the insulation resin 13 is obtained, and a mounting procedure becomes easy.

The insulation resin 13 covering the coil portion 7 securely fills the grooves 6 between the conductors 5 by the flow property of the insulation resin 13. Because the insulation resin 13 is heated at the higher temperature than the curing temperature of the insulation resin 13, especially after the insulation resin 13 fill the grooves 6 of the coil portion 7, a formation of voids in the grooves 6 can be prevented.

Accordingly, short-circuiting between adjoining conductors 5 and corrosion and the like of the conductors 5 due to an invading of moisture or the like into the grooves 6 are eliminated, and the reliability becomes improved.

Also, because the cleaning process for cleaning the insulation resin 13 is included prior to the heating process, resin bath 11 simply adhering to the substrate 1 after it is dipped into the resin bath 11 in the insulation resin coating process can be washed out in the cleaning process. This further improves flatness of the outer coating 8, since it eliminates excess amount of electrodeposition insulation resin to flow and cure, and only the insulation resin 13 deposited on the conductors 5 of the substrate 1 cures.

Since the insulation resin specifically used for the electrodeposition is epoxy-based resin, it is easily deposited on the conductors 5.

According to the present exemplary embodiment, as described above, flatness of the outer coating 8 is obtained, and the mounting of the chip inductor to a mount board and the like becomes easy.

Moreover, since large area electrical contacts are made between the electrodes 9 and the conductive layers 4 without the outer coating 8 in between, it improves reliability of the contacts.

In addition, since the insulation resin 13 heated at the lower temperature than the curing temperature securely fills the grooves 6, it eliminates short-circuiting between the adjoining conductors 5 and corrosion of the conductors 5, so as to improve the reliability. A good result was obtained for the resin used in this exemplary embodiment especially when the lower temperature than the curing temperature was set at 130°C and the higher temperature at 230°C. However, these temperatures are changed, naturally, depending on the kind of resin and curing agent used.

In this exemplary embodiment, although the grooves 6 in the coil portion 7 are not cut into a body of substrate 1, the grooves may be cut into the body of substrate 1.

Second Exemplary Embodiment

A method of manufacturing a chip inductor in the second exemplary embodiment is a further improvement of the first exemplary embodiment.

Fig. 6 (a) through Fig. 6 (d) illustrate an electrode forming process of the chip inductor according to the present exemplary embodiment, Fig. 7 is a sectional view of the chip inductor, and Fig. 8 is a perspective view of the chip inductor.

In this exemplary embodiment, detailed descriptions are omitted up to the electrodeposition coating process, as they are the same as those in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 in the first exemplary embodiment.

The electrode forming process of this embodiment includes a process of forming electrodes 9 on outer coating 8 over conductive layer 4 formed on outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1. In the electrode forming process, the electrodes 9 are formed in a manner that conductive resin 16 is coated on parts of the conductive layers 4 formed on the end surfaces 3, and the coated surfaces are flattened thereafter by a flattening plate 17 pressed thereon, as shown in Fig. 6 (a) and 6 (b),

200E40-0326000T

followed by a curing of the conductive resin 16.

In addition, each electrode 9 is so formed that thickness (W1) of the electrode 9 formed around the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 is less than thickness (W2) of the outer coating 8 formed over the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1, as shown in Fig. 7.

The electrode 9 is formed on the outer coating 8 from the end surface 3 extending at least to a position (W3) that faces conductor 5. And, in particular, the width (W3) of the electrodes 9 formed over the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 is larger than 1/6 (W4) of a length of the substrate 1 but smaller than a half (W5) of the length.

According to the method of manufacturing of this embodiment, the following advantages are obtained, in addition to the advantages of the first exemplary embodiment. That is, the electrodes 9 can be formed on the outer coating 8, even if the conductors 5 are provided over an entire surface of the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1, since the electrodes 9 are formed over the conductive layers 4 with outer coating 8 in between. In the foregoing manner, this embodiment provides the possibility of increasing a coil area even with the same size of the substrate being used, thereby allowing an increase in inductance while realizing miniaturization at the same time.

Especially, since the electrodes 9 are provided on the outer periphery of the substrate 1, the Manhattan phenomenon (a phenomenon in which one end of a chip component lifts up, and a connection between the circuit board and any of the electrodes 9 fails) during soldering to a circuit board can be eliminated, thereby improving reliability of the mounting.

Furthermore, since there is a process of forming the conductive layers 4 on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, the electrodes 9 can be formed also on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1. This further improves a mounting reliability.

The electrodes 9 are formed especially in such a configuration that thickness of the electrodes 9 formed on the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 is thinner than the thickness of the outer coating 8 formed on the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1. This eliminates a peeling-off of the electrodes 9 while attaining a low-profile structure, even when the electrodes 9 are formed over the outer coating 8, so as to improve reliability.

The electrodes 9 can be formed precisely, since they are formed in the manner that conductive resin 16 is coated and cured. In addition, because the conductive resin 16 is cured after it is coated and the coated surface is flattened by being pressed against flattening plate 17, the mounting surface of the electrodes 9 can be made flat to improve easiness of mounting.

The width (W3) of the electrodes 9 is so arranged that it is larger than 1/6 (W4) of a width of the outer periphery of the substrate 1 but smaller than a half (W5) of the substrate 1. This securely eliminates the Manhattan phenomenon during soldering of the electrodes 9 to the circuit board and the like, thereby improving the connection reliability.

According to the second embodiment of the present invention, in addition to the advantage of the first embodiment, there are such advantages as an increase in

inductance while realizing miniaturization, and an improvement in connection reliability. In addition, it also avoids the electrodes 9 from peeling-off, so as to also improve the reliability.

According to the second embodiment of the present invention, the electrodes 9 are formed from the end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 up to at least the positions where each faces their respective conductor 5, in the electrode forming process. However, the electrodes 9 may be formed in a manner that they locate between the end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 to the conductor 5. In other words, the outer coating 8 is removed partly or entirely, and the electrodes 9 are connected to the conductive layer 4 at the removed area. The peeling-off of the electrodes 9 can be suppressed in this case, as compared to the case in which the electrodes 9 are formed over the outer coating 8. Well known means such as laser beam stripping, machine cutting, and the like can be used for the removal of the outer coating 8.

In addition, although the conductive layer 4 is formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 in the conductive layer forming process of the present invention, a process may be employed that does not form the conductive layer 4 on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, leaving these surfaces not coated with a conductive-layer, as shown in Fig. 9. In this instance, the inductance can be increased while achieving miniaturization, since there is no conductive substance on the end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 to shield magnetic flux generated by the coil portion 7. The conductive layer 4 and the electrodes 9 can be connected even in this case by removing the outer coating 8 partially or entirely.

Alternatively, the holder 14 shown in Fig. 2 may be made of a conductive elastic member, to produce non-deposited areas where the outer coating 8 is not formed at the ends of the conductive layer 4.

Third Exemplary Embodiment

A method of manufacturing a chip inductor in this exemplary embodiment is a further improvement of the method of manufacturing the chip inductor of the first exemplary embodiment.

Fig. 10 (a) and Fig. 10 (b) are sectional views of chip inductors according to the third exemplary embodiment of the present invention, Fig. 11 is a sectional view of another chip inductor, and Fig. 12 is a perspective view of the chip inductor.

Detailed descriptions are omitted up to the electrodeposition coating process, as they are same as those in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 in the first exemplary embodiment. According to the present exemplary embodiment, a process is provided to form conductive layers 4 on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, in the conductive layer forming process. There is also another process, in the electrode forming process, to cut surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1.

In the electrode forming process, the laser beam is scanned for a plurality of times to cut the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1. A cutting depth to cut the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 is an extent that does not expose both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1.

The following advantages can be obtained according to the foregoing

method, in addition to the advantages of the first exemplary embodiment, as shown in Fig. 10 (a) and Fig. 10 (b). That is, since the process includes cutting the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, the insulation resin 13 can be removed by the cutting, as shown in Fig. 10 (b), even if the conductive layers 4 formed on the end surfaces 3 are covered with the insulation resin 13, as shown in Fig. 10 (a). The insulation resin 13 flows over the end surfaces 3 when the electrodeposition insulation resin is deposited to the surface of the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7.

As a result, it is not likely that electrical contacts between the electrodes 9 and the conductive layers 4 are deteriorated, and that the shape of the electrodes 9 becomes large due to the deposited insulation resin 13. It therefore improves connection reliability of the electrodes, and achieves downsizing of the chip inductor.

Since the cutting depth to cut the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 is set to the extent not to expose both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, a connection reliability between the conductive layers 4 and the electrodes 9 on both end surfaces 3 when forming the electrodes 9 on the end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 is improved.

Specifically, since surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 are cut by a plurality of laser beam scanning, the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 can be surely cut, thereby resulting in an improvement of connection reliability.

According to the third exemplary embodiment of the present invention, as described above, an external shape of the outer coating 8 never becomes round due to surface tension of the insulation resin 13 even if external dimensions are considerably small. And, it becomes such a shape that is generally the same with an external shape of the conductive layer 4, thereby making the outer coating 8 flat, and improving easiness of mounting to a circuit board or the like.

It also improves connection reliability of the electrodes 9 to the conductive layers 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, while achieving miniaturization at the same time.

According to this exemplary embodiment, the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 are cut with laser irradiation in the electrode forming process. However, surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed at edges of the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 may also be cut, as shown in Fig. 13, with the laser irradiation. This method can result in further improvement in connection reliability of the electrodes 9 to the conductive layers 4.

Fourth Exemplary Embodiment

A method of manufacturing a chip inductor in the fourth exemplary embodiment is another improvement to the method of manufacturing the chip inductor of the first exemplary embodiment.

Fig. 14(a) through Fig. 14(c) illustrate an etching process of a chip inductor in the manufacturing process according to the fourth embodiment of the present invention, Fig. 15 illustrates a process showing formation of an oxide film in the

manufacturing process of the chip inductor, Fig. 16 is a sectional view of the chip inductor, and Fig. 17 is a perspective view of the chip inductor. Detailed descriptions are omitted for the general manufacturing process and the electrodeposition coating process shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, as they are the same as those of the first exemplary embodiment.

In this exemplary embodiment, an etching process is provided as shown in Fig. 14(a) through Fig. 14(c), wherein a chip inductor element, which has a groove by laser irradiation, is dipped into electrolytic solution 19, electric field is applied between conductive layer 4 and the electrolytic solution 19 with power supply 21 connected to a pair of electrode plates 20, and the element is electrolytically etched so that thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4 becomes larger than width (W1) of conductor 5 of the coil portion 7.

In this etching process, the element is etched electrolytically in a manner that substrate 1 formed with conductive layer 4 is placed in vessel 22, one of the electrode plates 20 is inserted in the vessel 22, and electric field is applied between the conductive layer 4 and the electrolytic solution 19 through the pair of electrode plates 20 while the substrate 1 is kept in contact with the electrode plate 20 located in vessel 22.

Another process is provided, after the etching process, to form oxide film 23 over the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7, as shown in Fig. 15(b).

The following advantages are obtained through the above method, in addition to those obtained in the first exemplary embodiment.

It is that, cutting dust 10 produced during groove-cutting process of the conductive layer 4 can be removed, even if they remain firmly attached to the surface of the conductive layer 4 and in grooves 6 of the substrate 1, since the substrate 1, after cutting with laser, is etched electrolytically.

As a result, it avoids adjoining conductors 5 from short-circuiting therebetween, and a film of the insulation resin 13 from becoming not uniform in the insulation resin coating process, and thereby the reliability can be improved.

Moreover, because the element is etched electrolytically by applying electric field between the conductive layer 4 of the substrate 1 and the electrolytic solution 19, while the element is placed in the vessel 22 and kept in contact with the electrode plate 20, it is possible to circulate the electrolytic solution 19 in contact with the conductive layer 4 efficiently for carrying out the etching successfully.

The etching process is specially provided so as to make thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4 larger than width (W1) of the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7. This eliminates a reduction in inductance because a surface area of the conductor 5 does not decrease even when a number of turns of the conductor 5 is increased, thereby improving reliability.

In addition, there is provided a process of forming oxide film 23 on the conductor 5 after the etching process, which improves adhesion of the electrodeposited insulation resin 13 to the conductor 5. Consequently, it prevents peeling-off between the insulation resin 13 and the conductor 5, so as to positively avoid corrosion, disconnection, and the like of the coil. Moreover, there are cases, depending on the kind of the electrodeposition resin, in which deposition of the

insulation resin for electrodeposition on the surface of conductor 5 of the coil portion 7 can be facilitated by forming the oxide film 23. In general, a highly conductive material such as copper is used for the conductor 5. Since oxide layer of such material has electrical conductivity, it is unlikely that presence of the oxide layer prevents the electrodeposition.

In addition to the advantages of the first exemplary embodiment, the fourth exemplary embodiment of the present invention, as described, prevents adjoining conductors 5 from short-circuiting therebetween, and a film of the insulation resin 13 from becoming not uniform in the insulation resin coating process, and thereby the reliability is improved.

In this exemplary embodiment, the electrolytic etching process was disclosed. However, the same result is obtained even with a chemical etching process that uses acidic solution, in place of the electrolytic etching process.

And, when the element formed with the conductive layer 4 is chemically etched while being vibrated with ultrasonic wave, acidic solution in contact with the conductive layer 4 can be circulated efficiently, to successfully carry out the etching.

However, the electrolytic etching can shorten etching time, and is easy to control a degree of etching, and is capable of etching more precisely.

Furthermore, in the etching process of the fourth exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a process is provided, in which the substrate 1 is electrolytically etched so that the thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4 becomes larger than the width (W1) of the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7. However, it is also acceptable to make the thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4 smaller than the width (W1) of the conductor 5.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

According to the present invention, as described above, there is realized a chip inductor having an external shape that is generally the same with an external shape of conductive layer, since the external shape of its outer coating never becomes round due to surface tension of the insulation resin even if external dimensions of it are significantly small. Consequently, this can provide a method of manufacturing the chip inductor which makes the outer coating 8 flat, and improve easiness of mounting to a circuit board or the like.

DESCRIPTION

METHOD OF MANUFACTURING A CHIP INDUCTOR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a method of manufacturing a chip inductor for use in a variety of consumer electronic equipment and the like.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

With reference to the accompanying drawings, a conventional method of manufacturing a chip inductor will be described hereinafter.

Fig. 18 illustrates a conventional manufacturing process of a chip inductor, Fig. 19 is a cross sectional view of the chip inductor, and Fig. 20 is a perspective view of the chip inductor.

In Fig. 18 through Fig. 20, the conventional method of manufacturing the chip inductor comprises a first step of forming conductive layer 32 on rectangular prism substrate 31 made of insulating material of approximately 0.5 mm square by 1 mm in length, a second step of forming coil portion 35 having spiral conductor 33 and groove 34 by slitting the conductive layer 32 spirally with laser 37, a third step of forming electrodes 36 at both ends of the coil portion 35, and a fourth step of forming outer coating 39 by coating the coil portion 35 with insulation resin 38, followed by heating.

In the fourth step, the coil portion 35 is coated on its entire periphery with the insulation resin 38 by rolling the substrate 31 in a direction of (A) on a tape coated with the insulation resin 38.

Thereafter, the insulation resin 38 is heated to form the outer coating 39.

In the above-described method of the prior art, since the insulation resin 38 is coated while rolling the substrate 31 on the tape coated with the insulation resin 38, an external shape of the insulation resin 38 enclosing the prism substrate 31 becomes cylindrical, as shown in the cross sectional view of Fig. 19, due to its surface tension.

The chip inductor is especially susceptible to an influence of surface tension of the insulation resin 38, because of very small external dimensions of its main body, which is approximately 0.5 mm square by 1 mm in length.

This causes a surface of the outer coating 39 to become round, thereby giving rise to a problem that it can not be mounted properly to a circuit board or the like as it rotates when it is mounted.

The present invention addresses the above-described problem, and is intended to provide a method of manufacturing a chip inductor that makes a mounting surface of the outer coating flat, so as to assure reliable mounting.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In a manufacturing process of a chip inductor, the present invention comprises an electrodeposition coating process, in which an element main body having a coil portion formed thereon is dipped into a bath for electrodepositing a

insulation resin, and an electric field is applied between a conductor of the coil and the resin bath, to cover the coil with the resin by depositing the electrodeposition insulation resin at least on a surface of the conductor of the coil.

The above-described method covers the coil with the electrodeposition insulation resin, instead of coating it with an insulation resin, thereby avoiding an external shape of the outer coating from becoming round due to surface tension of the insulation resin, even if external dimensions of the chip inductor are considerably small. Therefore, this produces an external shape that generally resemble to resembles an external shape of a conductive layer, so as to make the outer coating flat, and to improve easiness of mounting of the chip inductor to a circuit board or the like.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figs. 1(a) to 1(f) illustrate a manufacturing process of a chip inductor according to a first exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 2(a) to 2(c) illustrate an electrodeposition coating process of the chip inductor;

Figs. 3(a) to 3(c) illustrate a heating process of the chip inductor;

Fig. 4 is a sectional view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 5 is a perspective view of the chip inductor;

Figs. 6(a) to 6(d) illustrate an electrode forming process of a chip inductor according to a second exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 7 is a sectional view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 8 is a perspective view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 9 is a sectional view of another chip inductor according to the second exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

~~Fig. 10 is a sectional view~~ Figs. 10(a) and 10(b) are sectional views of a chip inductor according to a third exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 11 is a sectional view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 12 is a perspective view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 13 is a sectional view of another chip inductor according to the third exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 14(a) to 14(c) illustrate an etching process of a chip inductor according to a fourth exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

Figs. 15(a) and 15(b) illustrate a process of forming an oxide film of the chip inductor;

Fig. 16 is a sectional view of the chip inductor;

Fig. 17 is a perspective view of the chip inductor;

Figs. 18(a) to 18(d) illustrate a manufacturing process of a chip inductor of the prior art;

Fig. 19 is a sectional view of the prior art chip inductor; and

Fig. 20 is a perspective view of the prior art chip inductor.

THE BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

First Exemplary Embodiment

~~With reference to the accompanying drawings, the present invention as set forth in claims 1 through claim 9 is described according to the exemplary embodiment.~~

~~Referring to Fig. 1 though~~ Referring to Fig. 1 through Fig. 5, a method of manufacturing a chip inductor according to this exemplary embodiment of the invention comprises:

a conductive layer forming process for forming conductive layer 4 on outer periphery 2 and end surfaces 3 of substrate 1 made of insulating material having a prism shape of approximately 0.5 mm square by 1 mm in length;

a coil portion forming process for forming coil portion 7 having conductor 5 and groove 6 by cutting spirally the conductive layer 4 formed on the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 while removing cutting dust 10 of the conductive layer 4;

an etching process for etching the chip inductor element having the coil portion 7 formed thereon;

an insulation resin coating process for forming outer coating 8 by coating the outer periphery 2 and the conductive layer 4 of the etched element with insulation resin 13;

and an electrode forming process for forming electrodes 9 at both ends of the coil portion 7, and for making electrical contacts between the electrodes 9 and the conductive layer 4.

Furthermore, in the insulation resin coating process, the substrate 1 having the coil portion 7 formed thereon is dipped into epoxy-based insulation resin bath 11 for electrodeposition while being held by holder 14, and an electric field is applied between the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7 and the resin bath 11, as shown in Fig. 2. The electric field is applied by power supply 12 connected between electrode plate 15 and the holder 14. Application of the electric field causes the electrodeposition insulation resin to deposit on at least a surface of the conductor 5, to cover the coil portion 7 as insulation resin 13. As described, the insulation resin coating process includes an electrodeposition process. Electrophoretic resin generally available on the market can be used as the electrodeposition resin.

In the electrodeposition process, surfaces of the conductive layer 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 are not exposed to the electrodeposition insulation resin in the resin bath 11, as shown in Fig. 2(b), so as not to be coated with the insulation resin 13. In addition, there is provided an electric-field controlling process to cease application of the electric field before thickness (W1) of the insulation resin 13 covering the coil portion 7 ~~become~~ becomes greater than thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4, as shown in Fig. 2 (c).

Furthermore, there ~~are~~ is a cleaning process for washing the insulation resin 13, after the electrodeposition process, as well as a heating process, thereafter, for heating the insulation resin 13 to cure.

In the heating process, the insulation resin 13 is heated at a temperature lower than its curing temperature, and then at another temperature higher than the curing temperature of the resin to cure the insulation resin 13.

More specifically, in the heating process, the insulation resin 13 is heated at a temperature (130°C) that is lower than the curing temperature to allow the insulation resin 13 to flow and to fill grooves 6 in the coil portion 7, as shown in Fig. 3(b). The insulation resin 13 is then heated at a temperature (230°C) higher than the curing temperature to form a continuous layer of the insulation resin, as shown in Fig. 3(c).

According to the foregoing method, the insulation resin 13 is not formed by a coating method, but the electrodeposition insulation resin is deposited only on the conductor 5, and cover the entire coil portion 7. Thus, an amount of the coated insulation resin 13 can be controlled accurately as described above, so as to avoid an external shape of the outer coating 8 from becoming round due to surface tension of the insulation resin 13, even if external dimensions of the substrate 1 are substantially small. In other words, an external shape of the chip inductor becomes what is generally the same to an external shape of the conductive layer 4, thereby making the outer coating 8 flat, and improving easiness of mounting it to a circuit board or the like.

In particular, since there is the electric-field controlling process provided in the electrodeposition process to cease application of the electric field before the thickness of the insulation resin 13 becomes greater than thickness of the conductive layer 4, the chip inductor can be miniaturized by reducing the thickness of the insulation resin 13. This makes the external shape of the insulation resin 13 to be the same more accurately to the external shape of the conductive layer 4, so as to further improve flatness of the mounting surface.

In the electrodeposition process, surfaces of the conductive layer 4 formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 are not deposited with the insulation resin 13. This allows electrical contacts between electrodes 9 and the conductive layers 4 when the electrodes 9 are formed at both ends of the coil portion 7. In addition, it also improves reliability of contacts, since surface area of the contacts between the electrodes 9 and the conductive layers 4 can be very large, as shown in Fig. 4.

Furthermore, because there is also the heating process for heating and curing the insulation resin 13 after the electrodeposition process, the outer coating can be formed adequately by curing the insulation resin 13 after the coil portion 7 is covered with the insulation resin 13.

In the heating process, the insulation resin 13 is heated at the temperature lower than the curing temperature, and thereafter, at another temperature higher than the curing temperature of the insulation resin 13. Therefore, the insulation resin 13 deposited to the conductors 5 fills the grooves 6 between adjoining conductors 5 due to its flow property when it is heated at the lower temperature than the curing temperature of the insulation resin 13. Thus, flat surface of the insulation resin 13 is obtained, and a mounting procedure becomes easy.

The insulation resin 13 covering the coil portion 7 securely fills the grooves 6 between the conductors 5 by the flow property of the insulation resin 13. Because

the insulation resin 13 is heated at the higher temperature than the curing temperature of the insulation resin 13, especially after the insulation resin 13 fill the grooves 6 of the coil portion 7, a formation of voids in the grooves 6 can be prevented.

Accordingly, short-circuiting between adjoining conductors 5 and corrosion and the like of the conductors 5 due to an invading of moisture or the like into the grooves 6 are eliminated, and the reliability becomes improved.

Also, because the cleaning process for cleaning the insulation resin 13 is included prior to the heating process, resin bath 11 simply adhering to the substrate 1 after it is dipped into the resin bath 11 in the insulation resin coating process can be washed out in the cleaning process. This further improves flatness of the outer coating 8, since it eliminates excess amount of electrodeposition insulation resin to flow and cure, and only the insulation resin 13 deposited on the conductors 5 of the substrate 1 cures.

Since the insulation resin specifically used for the electrodeposition is epoxy-based resin, it is easily deposited on the conductors 5.

According to the present exemplary embodiment, as described above, flatness of the outer coating 8 is obtained, and the mounting of the chip inductor to a mount board and the like becomes easy.

Moreover, since large area electrical contacts are made between the electrodes 9 and the conductive layers 4 without the outer coating 8 in between, it improves reliability of the contacts.

In addition, since the insulation resin 13 heated at the lower temperature than the curing temperature securely fills the grooves 6, it eliminates short-circuiting between the adjoining conductors 5 and corrosion of the conductors 5, so as to improve the reliability. A good result was obtained for the resin used in this exemplary embodiment especially when the lower temperature than the curing temperature was set at 130°C and the higher temperature at 230°C. However, these temperatures are changed, naturally, depending on [a] the kind of the resin and curing agent used.

In this exemplary embodiment, although the grooves 6 in the coil portion 7 are not cut into a body of substrate 1, the grooves may be cut into the body of substrate 1.

Second Exemplary Embodiment

~~With reference to the accompanying drawings, the present invention as set forth in claims 11 through claim 19 will be described hereinafter according to the exemplary embodiment.~~

A method of manufacturing a chip inductor in the second exemplary embodiment is a further improvement of the first exemplary embodiment.

Fig. 6 (a) through Fig. 6 (d) illustrate an electrode forming process of the chip inductor according to the present exemplary embodiment, Fig. 7 is a sectional view of the chip inductor, and Fig. 8 is a perspective view of the chip inductor.

In this exemplary embodiment, detailed descriptions are omitted up to the electrodeposition coating process, as they are the same as those in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2

in the first exemplary embodiment.

~~In the~~ The electrode forming process of this embodiment includes a process of forming electrodes 9 on outer coating 8 over conductive layer 4 formed on outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1. In the electrode forming process, the electrodes 9 are formed in a manner that conductive resin 16 is coated on parts of the conductive layers 4 formed on the end surfaces 3, and the coated surfaces are flattened thereafter by a flattening plate 17 pressed thereon, as shown in Fig. 6 (a) and 6 (b), followed by a curing of the conductive resin 16.

In addition, each electrode 9 is so formed that thickness (W1) of the electrode 9 formed around the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 is less than thickness (W2) of the outer coating 8 formed over the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1, as shown in Fig. 7.

The electrode 9 is formed on the outer coating 8 from the end surface 3 extending at least to a position (W3) that faces conductor 5. And, in particular, the width (W3) of the electrodes 9 formed over the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 is larger than 1/6 (W4) of a length of the substrate 1 but smaller than a half (W5) of the length.

According to the method of manufacturing of this embodiment, the following advantages are obtained, in addition to the advantages of the first exemplary embodiment. That is, the electrodes 9 can be formed on the outer coating 8, even if the conductors 5 are provided over an entire surface of the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1, since the electrodes 9 are formed over the conductive layers 4 with outer coating 8 in between. In the foregoing manner, this embodiment provides the possibility of increasing a coil area even with the same size of the substrate is being used, thereby allowing an increase in inductance while realizing miniaturization at the same time.

Especially, since the electrodes 9 are provided on the outer periphery of the substrate 1, the Manhattan phenomenon (a phenomenon in which one end of a chip component ~~lift~~ lifts up, and a connection between the circuit board and any of the electrodes 9 fails) during soldering to a circuit board can be eliminated, thereby improving reliability of the mounting.

Furthermore, since there is a process of forming the conductive layers 4 on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, the electrodes 9 can be formed also on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1. This further improves a mounting reliability.

The electrodes 9 are formed especially in such a configuration that thickness of the electrodes 9 formed on the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 is thinner than the thickness of the outer coating 8 formed on the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1. This eliminates a peeling-off of the electrodes 9 while attaining a low-profile structure, even when the electrodes 9 are formed over the outer coating 8, so as to improve reliability.

The electrodes 9 can be formed precisely, since they are formed in the manner that conductive resin 16 is coated and cured. In addition, because the conductive resin 16 is cured after it is coated and the coated surface is flattened by being pressed against flattening plate 17, the mounting surface of the electrodes 9 can be made flat to improve easiness of mounting.

2004010526007

The width (W3) of the electrodes 9 is so arranged that it is larger than 1/6 (W4) of a width of the outer periphery of the substrate 1 but smaller than a half (W5) of the substrate 1. This securely eliminates the Manhattan phenomenon during soldering of the electrodes 9 to the circuit board and the like, thereby improving the connection reliability.

According to the second embodiment of the present invention, in addition to the advantage of the first embodiment, there are such advantages as an increase in inductance while realizing miniaturization, and an improvement in connection reliability. In addition, it also avoids the electrodes 9 from the peeling-off, so as to also improve the reliability.

According to the second embodiment of the present invention, the electrodes 9 are formed from the end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 up to at least the positions where each faces their respective conductor 5, in the electrode forming process. However, the electrodes 9 may be formed in a manner that they locate between the end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 to the conductor 5. In other words, the outer coating 8 is removed partly or entirely, and the electrodes 9 are connected to the conductive layer 4 at the removed area. The peeling-off of the electrodes 9 can be suppressed in this case, as compared to the case in which the electrodes 9 are formed over the outer coating 8. Well known means such as laser beam stripping, machine cutting, and the like can be used for the removal of the outer coating 8.

In addition, although the conductive layer 4 is formed on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 in the conductive layer forming process of the present invention, a process may be employed that does not form the conductive layer 4 on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, leaving these surfaces not coated with a conductive-layer, as shown in Fig. 9. In this instance, the inductance can be increased while achieving miniaturization, since there is no conductive substance on the end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 to shield magnetic flux generated by the coil portion 7. The conductive layer 4 and the electrodes 9 can be connected even in this case by removing the outer coating 8 partially or entirely.

Alternatively, the holder 14 shown in Fig. 2 may be made of a conductive elastic member, to produce non-deposited areas where the outer coating 8 is not formed at the ends of the conductive layer 4.

Third Exemplary Embodiment

~~Referring now to the accompanying drawings, the invention as set forth in claims 20 through claim 25 will be described hereinafter according to this exemplary embodiment.~~

A method of manufacturing a chip inductor in this exemplary embodiment is a further improvement of the method of manufacturing the chip inductor of the first exemplary embodiment.

Fig. 10 (a) and Fig. 10 (b) are sectional views of chip inductors according to the third exemplary embodiment of the present invention, Fig. 11 is a sectional view of another chip inductor, and Fig. 12 is a perspective view of the chip inductor.

Detailed descriptions are omitted up to the electrodeposition coating process, as they are same as those in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 in the first exemplary

embodiment. According to the present exemplary embodiment, a process is provided to form conductive layers 4 on both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, in the conductive layer forming process. There is also another process, in the electrode forming process, to cut surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1.

In the electrode forming process, the laser beam is scanned for a plurality of times to cut the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1. A cutting depth to cut the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 is an extent that does not expose the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1.

The following advantages can be obtained according to the foregoing method, in addition to the advantages of the first exemplary embodiment, as shown in Fig.10 (a) and Fig. 10 (b). That is, since the process includes cutting process of the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, the insulation resin 13 can be removed by the cutting, as shown in Fig. 10 (b), even if the conductive layers 4 formed on the end surfaces 3 is are covered with the insulation resin 13, as ~~shows~~ shown in Fig. 10 (a). The insulation resin 13 flows over the end surfaces 3 when the electrodeposition insulation resin is deposited to the surface of the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7.

As a result, it is not likely that electrical contacts between the electrodes 9 and the conductive layers 4 are deteriorated, and that the shape of the electrodes 9 becomes large due to the deposited insulation resin 13. It therefore improves connection reliability of the electrodes, and achieves downsizing of the chip inductor.

Since the cutting depth to cut the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 is set to the extent not to expose the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, a connection reliability between the conductive layers 4 and the electrodes 9 on the both end surfaces 3 when forming the electrodes 9 on the end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 is improved.

Specifically, since surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 are cut by a plurality of laser beam scanning, the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 can be surely cut, thereby resulting in an improvement of connection reliability.

According to the third exemplary embodiment of the present invention, as described above, an external shape of the outer coating 8 never becomes round due to surface tension of the insulation resin 13 even if external dimensions are considerably small. And, it becomes such a shape that is generally the same with an external shape of the conductive layer 4, thereby making the outer coating 8 flat, and improving easiness of mounting to a circuit board or the like.

It also improves connection reliability of the electrodes 9 to the conductive layers 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1, while achieving miniaturization at the same time.

According to this exemplary embodiment, the surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed on the both end surfaces 3 of the substrate 1 are cut with laser irradiation in the electrode forming process. However, surfaces of the conductive layers 4 formed at edges of the outer periphery 2 of the substrate 1 may also be cut,

as shown in Fig. 13, with the laser irradiation. This method can result in further improvement in connection reliability of the electrodes 9 to the conductive layers 4.

Fourth Exemplary Embodiment

~~Referring now to the accompanying drawings, the invention as set forth in claims 26 through claim 32 will be described hereinafter according to this exemplary embodiment.~~

A method of manufacturing a chip inductor in the fourth exemplary embodiment is another improvement to the method of manufacturing the chip inductor of the first exemplary embodiment.

Fig. 14(a) through Fig. 14(c) illustrate an etching process of a chip inductor in the manufacturing process according to the fourth embodiment of the present invention, Fig. 15 illustrates a process showing formation of an oxide film in the manufacturing process of the chip inductor, Fig. 16 is a sectional view of the chip inductor, and Fig. 17 is a perspective view of the chip inductor. Detailed descriptions are omitted for the general manufacturing process and the electrodeposition coating process shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, as they are the same as those of the first exemplary embodiment.

In this exemplary embodiment, an etching process is provided as shown in Fig. 14(a) through Fig. 14(c), wherein a chip inductor element, which has a groove by laser irradiation, is dipped into electrolytic solution 19, electric field is applied between conductive layer 4 and the electrolytic solution 19 with power supply 21 connected to a pair of electrode plates 20, and the element is electrolytically etched so that thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4 becomes larger than width (W1) of conductor 5 of the coil portion 7.

In this etching process, the element is etched electrolytically in a manner that substrate 1 formed with conductive layer 4 is placed in vessel 22, one of the electrode plate plates 20 is inserted in the vessel 22, and electric field is applied between the conductive layer 4 and the electrolytic solution 19 through the pair of electrode plates 20 while the substrate 1 is kept in contact with the electrode plate 20 located in vessel 22.

Another process is provided, after the etching process, to form oxide film 23 over the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7, as shown in Fig. 15(b).

The following advantages are obtained through the above method, in addition to those obtained in the first exemplary embodiment.

It is that, cutting dust 10 produced during groove-cutting process of the conductive layer 4 can be removed, even if they remain firmly attached to the surface of the conductive layer 4 and in grooves 6 of the substrate 1, since the substrate 1, after cutting with laser, is etched electrolytically.

As a result, it avoids adjoining conductors 5 from short-circuiting therebetween, and a film of the insulation resin 13 from becoming not uniform in the insulation resin coating process, and thereby the reliability can be improved.

Moreover, because the element is etched electrolytically by applying electric field between the conductive layer 4 of the substrate 1 and the electrolytic solution 19, while the element is placed in the vessel 22 and kept in contact with the

electrode plate 20, it is possible to circulate the electrolytic solution 19 in contact with the conductive layer 4 efficiently for carrying out the etching successfully.

The etching process is specially provided so as to make thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4 larger than width (W1) of the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7. This eliminates a reduction in inductance because a surface area of the conductor 5 does not decrease even when a number of turns of the conductor 5 is increased, thereby improving reliability.

In addition, there is provided a process of forming oxide film 23 on the conductor 5 after the etching process, which improves adhesion of the electrodeposited insulation resin 13 to the conductor 5. Consequently, it prevents peeling-off between the insulation resin 13 and the conductor 5, so as to positively avoid corrosion, disconnection, and the like of the coil. Moreover, there are cases, depending on the kind of the electrodeposition resin, in which deposition of the insulation resin for electrodeposition on the surface of conductor 5 of the coil portion 7 can be facilitated by forming the oxide film 23. In general, a highly conductive material such as copper is used for the conductor 5. Since oxide layer of such material has electrical conductivity, it is unlikely that presence of the oxide layer prevents the electrodeposition.

In addition to the advantages of the first exemplary embodiment, the fourth exemplary embodiment of the present invention, as described, prevents adjoining conductors 5 from short-circuiting therebetween, and a film of the insulation resin 13 from becoming not uniform in the insulation resin coating process, and thereby the reliability is improved.

In this exemplary embodiment, the electrolytic etching process was disclosed. However, the same result is obtained even with a chemical etching process that uses acidic solution, in place of the electrolytic etching process.

And, when the element formed with the conductive layer 4 is chemically etched while being vibrated with ultrasonic wave, acidic solution in contact with the conductive layer 4 can be circulated efficiently, to successfully carry out the etching.

However, the electrolytic etching can shorten etching time, and is easy to control a degree of etching, and is capable of etching more precisely.

Furthermore, in the etching process of the fourth exemplary embodiment of the present invention, a process is provided, in which the substrate 1 is electrolytically etched so that the thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4 becomes larger than the width (W1) of the conductor 5 of the coil portion 7. However, it is also acceptable to make the thickness (W2) of the conductive layer 4 smaller than the width (W1) of the conductor 5.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

According to the present invention, as described above, there is realized a chip inductor having an external shape that is generally the same with an external shape of conductive layer, since the external shape of its outer coating never becomes round due to surface tension of the insulation resin even if external dimensions of it are significantly small. Consequently, this can provide a method of

manufacturing the chip inductor which makes the outer coating 8 flat, and improve easiness of mounting to a circuit board or the like.